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Veterans Administration

Arthrogram
Process and Procedure
Medical Center, Seattle

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Radiology Service

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WHAT IS AN ARTHROGRAM?

An arthrogram x-ray provides your doctor with important information about the condition of your knee, shoulder or other joint. A dye (called a contrast medium) and air are injected at the side of the kneecap. The dye shows up on the x-ray. This helps your doctor locate any damage in the joint or in the surrounding tissues.

This examination is done in the x-ray department by a radiologist (ray-de-ol-o-gist.) Radiologists are doctors who specialize in taking and reading x-rays. An x-ray technologist will assist and operate the machinery during the exam.

HOW IS AN ARTHROGRAM DONE?

1) When you arrive in the x-ray department (Bldg. 100 Rm 2D100) you will be shown to an x-ray room and dressed in a hospital gown.

2) An assistant will shave and wash your knee. This helps protect against infection.

3) The radiologist will inject a local painkiller to deaden your skin.

4) After the pain killer takes effect, the air and dye will be injected and the needle removed. As the injection takes place you might feel a slight tightening in your knee. This is just the air and dye making room in your knee.

5) The doctor will then move your knee around in order to position the dye.

6) The radiologist will now take several x-rays of your knee. He will move your knee around to shoot the x-rays from different angles.

RECOVERY

Some swelling and soreness will occur in your joint after the arthrogram. Most of this swelling and soreness should disappear in 2-3 days. Some slight swelling and discomfort may be present for about a week. If the swelling persists for more than a week contact your doctor or nurse.

In rare occurrences, infection may occur. If you notice redness, additional swelling, or tenderness contact your nurse or doctor immediately.

KNEE

Your knee may feel stiff, so do gradual walking and weight bearing until comfortable.

SHOULDER

You should have your full movement in your shoulder within 2-3 days.

FINDING OUT THE RESULTS

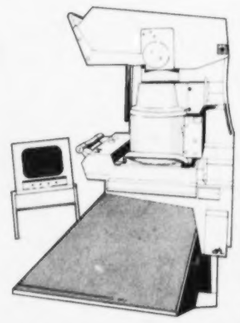
The radiologist will read the x-rays he takes of your knee or shoulder. He will then discuss the x-rays with your doctor. After your doctor has evaluated the results, he will explain the results to you and begin treatment. If you are an outpatient, the results will be explained at your next appointment. **If you don't understand the doctor's explanation ask questions.** It is important that you undestand why an x-ray was taken and the results.

PAIN

There is little pain associated with Arthrograms. Some people feel a tightening around the knee when the dye is injected. This is only mildly uncomfortable and temporary. The dye will be absorbed by your body and excreted through normal bodily functions.

HOW IT WORKS

Ordinarily x-rays pass through all but the hardest structures in your body. The dye will allow the softer tissues surrounding the joint to showup as clearly as the bones in the x-rays.



FLUOROSCOPE

Sometimes the radiologist will use a fluoroscope (floor-o-scope) to watch the injection. A fluoroscope allows the doctor to watch the needle and make an accurate placement of the dye. The fluoroscope is also used to position the knee for the x-rays.

LENGTH OF TIME

Arthrograms are very common x-rays. Several are done in this hospital every week. They take between 60 and 90 minutes. The x-rays will be processed and sent off to your doctor as soon as possible.

WHEN IS YOUR ARTHROGRAM?

DATE _____

MON TUES WED THUR FRI

TIME _____ AM/PM _____

LOCATION _____

BEING ON TIME

The appointment above has been set up for you and the time reserved for your x-ray. If you can not make the appointment please call the X-ray department 764-2444. They can then reschedule your appointment.

IMPORTANT

Relax! Let the doctor move your knee into the desired positions. Relax, even if tightness occurs, and the x-ray will go smoothly and quickly.

QUESTIONS

Feel free to ask any questions you may have about the x-ray or the equipment being used. The radiologist or the x-ray technologist will gladly answer them. Also, be sure to ask your doctor about the results of your exam and what the x-rays mean.

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